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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RESIDENCE HALL ENVIRONMENTS--LIVING-LEARNING VS. CONVENTIONAL UNITS. PERSONNEL AND GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION, DALLAS, TEXAS, MARCH, 1967).

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LIVING-LEARNING RESIDENCE HALLS WHICH INCLUDE CLASSROOMS, RECREATION FACILITIES, AND FACULTY OFFICES ALONG WITH THE DORMITORY ROOMS WERE COMPARED TO THE MORE CONVENTIONAL RESIDENCE HALLS. IT WAS EXPECTED THAT THE LIVING-LEARNING HALLS FOSTERED A MORE INTELLECTUAL AND COHESIVE ATMOSPHERE. UNDERGRADUATES IN A LARGE UNIVERSITY WHO RESIDED IN ONE OF SIX GROUPS OF CONVENTIONAL HALLS OR FOUR LIVING-LEARNING HALLS WERE GIVEN THE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT SCALES (CUES). THE QUESTIONNAIRE SOUGHT TO DETERMINE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF BOTH THE RESIDENCE HALLS AND OF THE TOTAL UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT. IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE FIVE SCALES OF THE CUES, THE LIVING-LEARNING RESIDENCE HALLS RATED ABOUT IN THE MIDDLE WITH THE CONVENTIONAL HALLS SHOWING BOTH THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST LEVELS. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE LIVING-LEARNING RESIDENCE UNITS ALONE DO NOT PROVIDE AN INTELLECTUAL ATMOSPHERE. THE STUDENTS PERCEIVED THE TOTAL UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT ABOUT THE SAME AS THEY PERCEIVED THEIR RESIDENCE HALL ENVIRONMENT. THE REPORT SUGGESTS THE NEED FOR FURTHER STUDY ON WHAT HAPPENS IN THOSE RESIDENCE HALLS HAVING A MORE INTELLECTUAL ENVIRONMENT. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL AND GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION (DALLAS, MARCH 1967). (NS)

Student Perceptions of Residence Hall Environments: Living-Learning vs. Conventional Units*

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Living-learning residence halls are a relatively new phenomenon on the American campus. At coeducational institutions these units usually consist of three parts: a wing for male students, a wing for female students, and a central area containing dining and recreation facilities, classrooms, science laboratories, faculty and administrative offices, an auditorium and, possibly, a library. The nearness of these facilities provides, of course, a convenience for students. But among the major purposes of living-learning residences are first, the enhancement of the cultural and intellectual life of students who live in them, and second, the establishment of a less impersonal, less hotel-like environment. To foster these objectives, usually a wide offering of courses is held in the halls, faculty advisors have offices in the complexes, full-time professional counselors are available for vocational or personal counseling, and there are extensive co-curricular activities.

To what extent do these elements contribute to a more intellectual and cohesive atmosphere? More exactly, to what extent do living-learning residence halls differ from conventional (i.e., non living-learning) halls

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[1]Paper presented at the 1967 American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention, Dallas, Texas.

in selected dimensions of their environment? In the interest of shedding light on this question this study describes student perceptions of their residence halls at one university. These perceptions, inferred from student verbal reports, are of course subjective measures of the environment; however, it can be argued that this subjective interpretation is what influences student behavior.

As a second phase of the study, student perceptions of the total university environment were obtained. By so doing, the relationship between residence hall and total university environments was investigated.

Method

The sample for this study was chosen during Winter term 1965 when 549 undergraduates were randomly selected from residence halls at a large university. Specifically two students were randomly chosen from each "house" in the halls, and the questionnaire used in this study was delivered to each student by the resident assistant of each unit. Students were allowed to complete the instrument in their room and to return the forms by campus mail. Although students were chosen at random for the study, they had not all been assigned to each hall at random. Thus there may have been differences in types of students who selected certain residence halls, which would of course introduce some bias in the results.

The response was excellent: 483 (88%) of the sample participated.

The instrument consisted of two parts: Part I was the College and University Environment Scales (CUES) developed by C. Robert Pace,[1] and used to measure the total university environment; Part II contained 65 items

[1] C. Robert Pace, College and University Environment Scales, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, 1963.

selected from CUES, which with minor modifications, measured student perceptions of their residence hall. Students responded TRUE or FALSE to items in both parts; TRUE when they thought the condition existed or was generally characteristic of the environment of the university (Part I) or their hall (Part II), and FALSE when they thought otherwise.

Description of the Scales

Through previous research, the author of CUES identified five scales that differentiated characteristics of total college settings. These same five scales were used in this study to differentiate between residence halls (Part II). A description of each scale and examples of items used to measure total university and residence hall environments follows.

Scale 1: Practicality -- Items in this calse emphasize personal status and practical benefit. Order and supervision are characteristic of the environment. Status is gained by knowing the right people, being in the right groups, and doing what is expected.

Examples of Items:

a. Student rooms are more likely to be decorated with pennants and pin-ups than with paintings, carving, mobiles, fabrics, etc.
b. Students here quickly learn what is done and not done.

Scale 2: Community -- Items in this scale described a friendly, cohesive group-oriented atmcsphere. Emphasized are group welfare and congeniality, rather than personal autonomy or detachment.

Examples of Items:

a. Students spend a lot of time together at the snack bars, taverns and in one another's rooms.
b. There is a lot of group spirit.

Scale 3: Awareness -- High scores on this scale indicated emphasis on personal, poetic, and political understanding. A search for personal meaning, a wide range of creative and appreciative relationships to the arts, and a concern for society are evident in the environment.

Examples of Items:

a. A controversial speaker always stirs up a lot of student discussion.
b. The expression of strong personal belief or conviction is pretty rare around here. (False)

Scale 4: Propriety -- Items in this scale reflect the degree to which politeness, protocol, and consideration are emphasized. Low scores reflect a more rebellious, assertive, convention-flouting atmosphere.

Examples of Items:

a. Students pay little attention to rules and regulations. (False)
b. Dormitory raids, water fights and other student pranks would be unthinkable here.

Scale 5: Scholarship -- Items in this scale reflect the degree to which competitive high academic achievement and intellectual discipline are emphasized. The pursuit of knowledge and theories, scientific or philosophical is carried on rigorously and vigorously.

Examples of Items:

a. Students set high standards of achievement for themselves.
b. Long, serious intellectual discussions are common among the students.

Analysis and Results

In several studies dealing with college environments, researchers have noted a marked difference between the freshmen-perceived environment and the environment as reported by upperclass students.[1] To be exact, freshmen tend to perceive the environment more "favorably;" that is, in comparison to upperclass students' perceptions, freshmen perceive a more intellectual, friendly, and considerate environment. Whatever the reasons for these differences--freshmen idealism, differences in values and critical thinking,[2]

[1] See, for example, George G. Stern, "Of Bardot and the State of our Colleges," Current Issue of Higher Education: 1966, Association for Higher Education, National Education Association, Washington, D.C.

[2] See, for example, Irvin J. Lehmann and Paul L. Dressel, Critical Thinking, Attitudes, and Values in Higher Education, Coop. Res. Project # 590, 1962.

the implications for this study were clear and consequently freshmen and upperclass students' perceptions of residence halls were analyzed separately. Furthermore, because males and females usually differ in perceptions (and were found to do so in this study), residence hall environments were also described separately by sex.

Dividing the sample into the above class and sex categories resulted in an extremely small sample size from smaller halls. Hence the halls were grouped according to similarity of design and campus location so that each group contained enough individuals for a reliable analysis. Consequently there were six conventional residence groups (three each of men and women), and four living-learning groups (Living-Learning Group I and Group II for women and for men).

The Findings

For each residence hall group, mean CUES scale scores are presented in Table 1, with freshmen and upperclass scores reported separately. Of particular interest is the "intellectual" environment of the residence groups, represented by the scholarship and awareness scales.

For women's halls, Conventional Group III had the least intellectual environment as seen by both upperclass and freshmen women. On the other hand, Conventional Group I had the most intellectual environment, with the living-learning units and Conventional Group II in the middle range.

For men's residence halls, Conventional Groups IV and V had the least intellectual environment as seen by both freshmen and upperclassmen. At the other extreme, Conventional Group IV was rated highest on the intellectual dimensions by upperclassmen and by freshmen who also perceived the living-

learning units as having highly intellectual environments.

Discriminant Analysis

Another more technical way of analyzing the residence hall groups is by the statistical method known as Discriminant Analysis. Using this technique the five scale scores for the residence groups can be summarized in two discriminant functions or axes. (Each function summarizes residence group differences on the five CUES scales.)

The first discriminant function, which accounted for 54 percent of the residence group differences, consisted of the awareness, scholarship and propriety scales. This intellectual-propriety dimension, as it might be termed, accounted for the major difference between the residence groups as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Thus, the residence groups on the far right were highest on this function, and conversely, those farthest to the left were lowest on this function. In both cases these were conventional residence halls, with the living-learning units falling in the middle.

Discriminant Function Two, indicated by the vertical axis, might be simply labelled practicality. Accounting for 23% of the difference between residence groups, this function mainly consisted of the CUES practicality scale. The living-learning and conventional halls were interspersed on this function, suggesting that each of these types of halls as a group were not particularly high or low on such environmental features as personal status, order and supervision.

The residence groups did not differ on the remaining scale: community. That is, student perceptions did not reveal any differences between residence groups in the amount of friendliness and group welfare evident.

To summarize, Figures 1 and 2 appear to indicate that: (1) the living-learning units, as generally perceived by both freshmen and upperclass

students, were in the middle range on the intellectual-propriety dimension; that is, the living-learning units were generally less intellectual and less conforming than some of the conventional residence halls but more than others; and (2) in spite of their larger size, the environment of the living-learning units were as friendly and group-oriented as the conventional residence groups.

Comparison of Total University and Residence Hall Environments

Student reactions to the total university (Part I) and their particular residence halls (Part II) are presented in Tables 2 and 3, summarized as mean scores for the five CUES scales. In addition to total university and residence hall means, presented also are university sub-scores, consisting of only those items from Part I repeated in Part II. Thus comparisons can be made for identical items between the way a student saw the total environment and the way he saw his particular residence hall.

The rank correlation between the university sub-scores and residence hall scores, given at the bottom of Tables 2 and 3, indicate that for most of the scales, and for the items selected, students tended to agree on the way they perceive the university and their residence hall. There were two exceptions, however: women's reactions to the practicality and awareness dimensions of the environment. For the remaining three scales, community, propriety and scholarship, the rank correlations for women were significant, as they were for all five scales for men.

Discussion

Including faculty offices, classrooms, a library, an auditorium for special drama and special lectures, and other such features as part of a residence complex would hopefully do more than provide conveniences for

students. These features should, as intended, also contribute to the intellectual-cultural-community environment of students therein. At the institution of this study, students in living-learning units did not perceive their residence environment as more intellectual than did students in every conventional unit. It may be that the items and scales adopted from CUES were not sensitive to the "intellectual" differences which people hoped to create in living-learning units. But on the other hand it also suggests that facilities alone are not enough, that perhaps of more importance is how the facilities are used. For example, faculty offices in living-learning units have little impact if students feel no more welcome to seek help, and common dining areas for faculty and students have little intellectual effect if each continues to dine separately.

On the other hand, living-learning units, in spite of their size, were viewed by students as being as friendly and cohesive as smaller, conventional halls. Apparently, the living-learning units in this study were succeeding in reducing the impersonal, hotel-like atmosphere which often characterizes the conventional large residence hall.

In the second phase of the study student perceptions of their residence hall and the university environment were found to be very similar. This was particularly true for men, while women's perceptions agreed on three of the five CUES dimensions. At least two reasons might explain the agreement in students views of their campus residence and the total institutional environment. First, in a large and complex university students have differing views of the total environment, views that are probably influenced by the parts of the university with which students have become more familiar, such as their residence hall or their major field of study.[1] Secondly, student reactions

[1]John A. Centra. Major Field as a Variable in Student Perceptions of a Total University Environment. Paper delivered at the American Educational Research Association Conference, Chicago, February 1966.

to both the university and their residence hall environment may be affected by individual differences (values, interests, etc.) causing students to respond to both sets of environments similarly.

Of these two reasons, the first has more significant implications. If campus residential environments greatly influence student reactions to the total university, one way to improve the university environment is by further concentrating on student residences. This study has indicated that some residences have had a more desirable environment (e.g., more "intellectual"), while the environment of others has been less desirable. The next question, it would seem, is to ask what happens in the former that encourages characteristics such as intellectualism, and what might be done with the latter group to bring about desirable changes.

TABLE I

FRESHMEN AND UPPERCLASS STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR RESIDENCE HALL
Mean Response for Part II, Residence Hall, for Conventional and Living-Learning Groups [1]

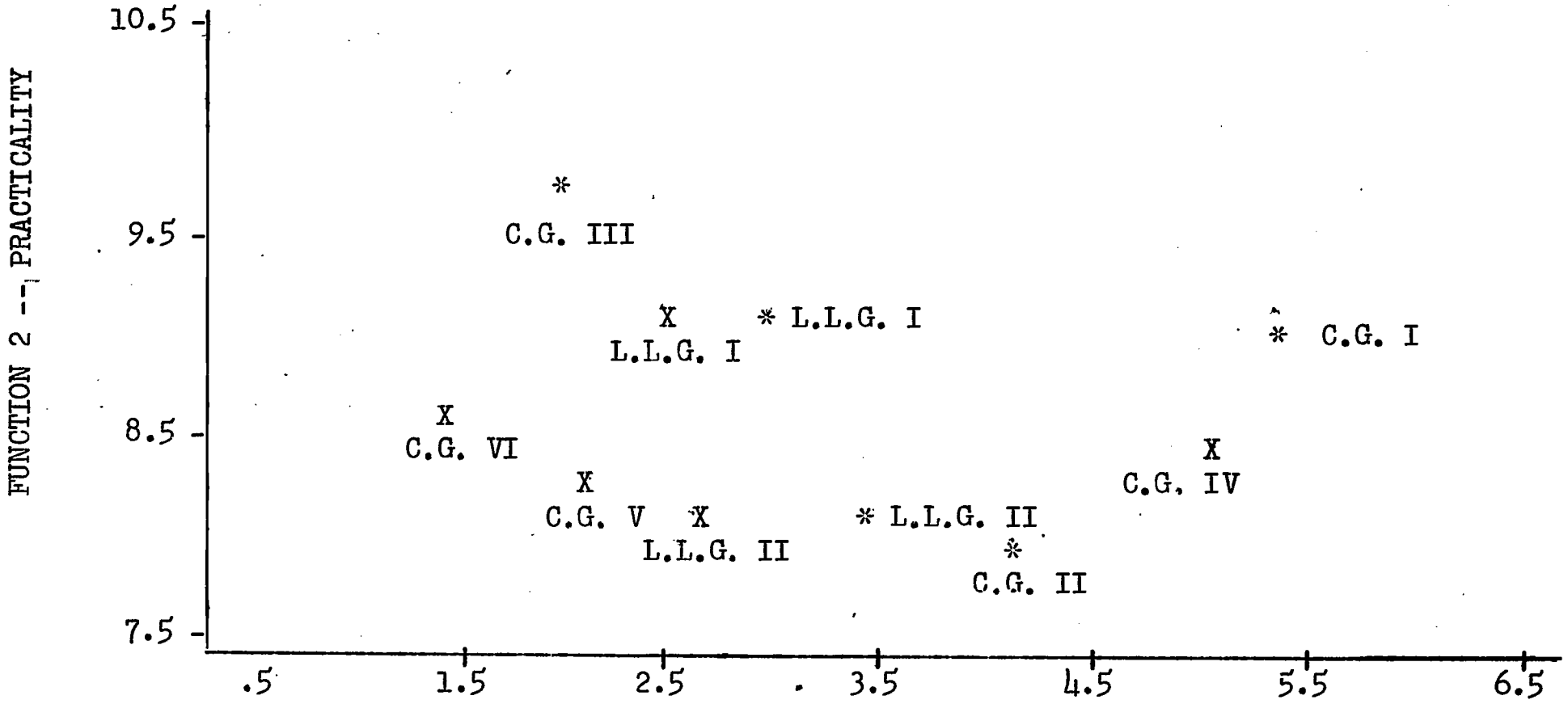
RESIDENCE GROUP	PRACTICALITY 12 items		COMMUNITY 15 items		AWARENESS 10 items		PROPRIETY 18 items		SCHOLARSHIP 10 items	
	Fresh-men	Upper Class	Fresh-men	Upper Class	Fresh-men	Upper Class	Fresh-men	Upper Class	Fresh-men	Upper Class
WOMEN'S RESIDENCES										
Conventional Group I N=32(Fr) N=32(UC)	7.6	7.3	11.2	10.8	6.3	5.7	9.9	9.8	6.9	6.4
Conventional Group II N=09(Fr) N=21(UC)	6.3	6.7	9.6	9.6	5.8	4.8	10.9	8.8	6.9	4.8
Conventional Group III N=22(Fr) N=07(UC)	7.8	8.4	10.6	10.4	5.1	3.7	9.1	8.4	5.7	4.3
Living-Learning Group I N=37(Fr) N=23(UC)	8.1	8.0	11.1	10.4	5.5	4.9	10.9	8.2	6.9	4.9
Living-Learning Group II N=35(Fr) N=26(UC)	7.2	7.2	9.5	9.6	5.6	4.6	9.4	8.9	5.5	4.6
MEN'S RESIDENCES										
Conventional Group IV N=15(Fr) N=15(UC)	7.6	7.0	10.2	9.2	5.3	5.2	9.2	9.3	6.3	6.1
Conventional Group V N=35(Fr) N=14(UC)	8.4	7.3	9.7	9.6	3.7	3.8	7.8	6.9	4.7	4.3
Conventional Group VI N=18(Fr) N=16(UC)	7.8	7.5	9.7	9.0	4.7	2.8	7.2	7.7	5.4	3.7
Living-Learning Group I N=32(Fr) N=30(UC)	7.5	8.0	10.5	10.0	4.9	4.3	8.7	7.2	6.4	4.8
Living-Learning Group II N=33(Fr) N=26(UC)	7.2	7.3	9.9	9.1	5.7	4.1	8.6	7.5	6.2	4.5

[1] Grouped according to location and physical similarities.

Figure 1

UPPERCLASS STUDENTS

KEY
* = Women
X = Men
C.G. = Conventional Group
L.L.G. = Living-Learning Group



FUNCTION 1 -- INTELLECTUALISM-PROPRIETY

Figure 2

FRESHMEN STUDENTS

KEY
* = Women
X = Men
C.G. = Conventional Group
L.L.G. = Living-Learning Group

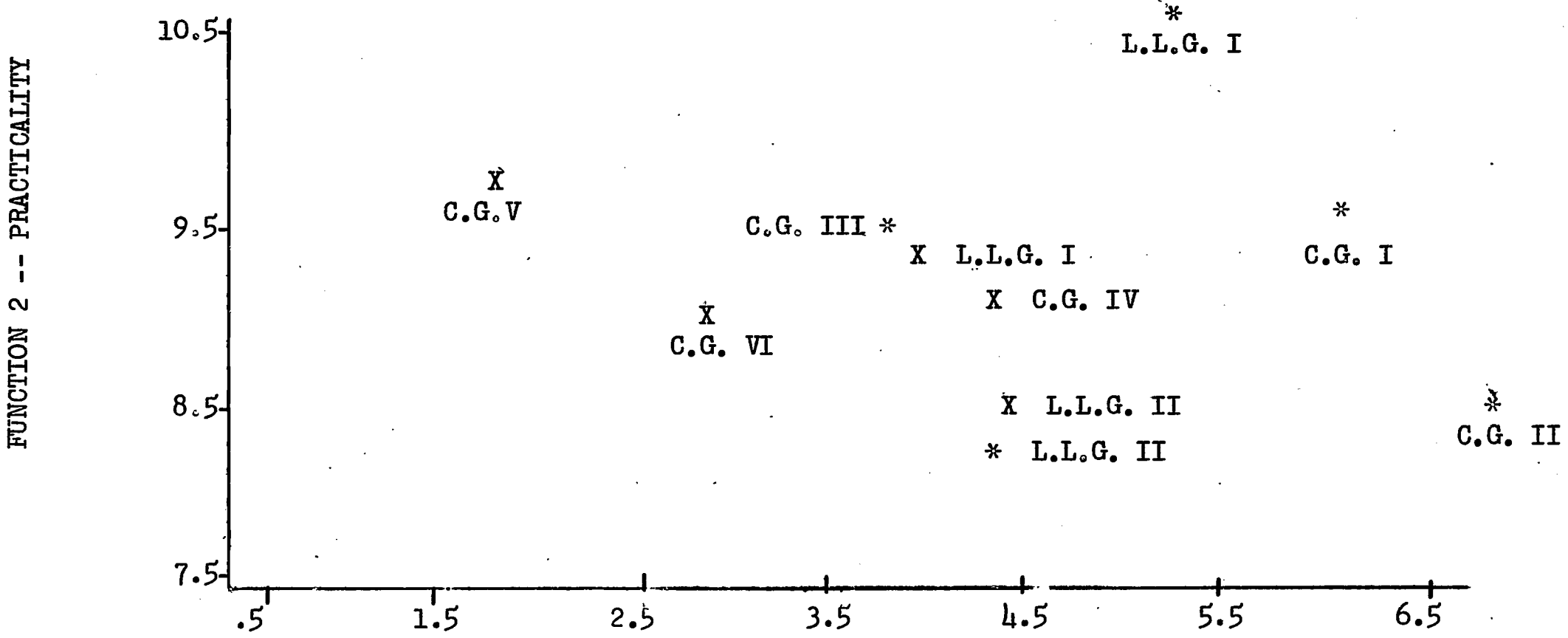


TABLE 2

MEAN SCORES FOR EACH WOMEN'S RESIDENCE HALL AND THE TOTAL UNIVERSITY

SCALE

RESIDENCE HALL		PRACTICALITY			COMMUNITY			AWARENESS			PROPRIETY			SCHOLARSHIP		
		Total Univ.	Univ. Sub-Score[1]	Res. Hall	Total Univ.	Univ. Sub-Score[1]	Res. Hall	Total Univ.	Univ. Sub-Score[1]	Res. Hall	Total Univ.	Univ. Sub-Score[1]	Res. Hall	Total Univ.	Univ. Sub-Score[1]	Res. Hall
Number of Items		30	12	12	30	15	15	30	10	10	30	18	18	30	10	10
Conv. Group I	No. in Sample															
A	N=10	19.0	8.6	8.1	17.7	10.7	11.0	18.2	6.1	5.6	13.7	8.8	10.1	14.5	6.9	7.1
B	N=11	18.5	8.2	7.2	18.1	11.2	12.3	21.8	7.7	6.6	14.4	8.8	11.0	18.6	7.2	7.1
C	N=12	18.4	8.3	7.2	16.9	10.8	10.8	18.9	6.6	5.6	13.2	8.0	10.7	16.8	6.8	6.5
D	N=10	18.7	8.7	7.5	20.1	12.1	11.4	21.1	7.3	6.5	12.8	7.8	9.9	17.8	6.3	6.4
E	N=10	18.1	8.0	7.1	16.8	10.4	10.0	18.6	6.8	5.9	11.7	7.6	8.9	18.2	7.1	6.8
F	N=10	18.9	7.9	7.5	18.2	11.4	10.6	20.2	6.6	5.8	12.8	7.7	8.4	18.3	6.5	6.0
Conv. Group II																
A	N=15	17.8	7.4	6.3	15.7	9.3	9.1	19.4	5.8	5.2	13.7	8.8	10.0	15.9	6.3	5.2
B	N=15	19.2	7.1	6.8	16.7	10.4	10.1	19.6	6.0	5.0	13.0	8.1	8.9	15.7	5.9	5.7
Conv. Group III																
A	N=14	18.0	7.9	7.8	16.7	10.5	9.6	19.6	6.4	4.8	12.8	8.9	9.6	15.6	5.8	5.5
B	N=15	18.6	7.6	8.1	18.0	10.9	11.4	21.3	7.1	4.8	11.6	7.3	8.3	17.5	6.2	5.3
Liv-Learning Gr.I																
A	N=18	18.1	7.8	8.0	17.4	10.9	10.2	19.8	6.6	5.3	11.3	7.4	8.5	17.2	6.3	5.3
B	N=21	18.9	8.2	7.8	18.5	11.1	10.8	20.4	7.0	5.3	14.0	9.3	10.3	18.7	6.7	6.4
C	N=21	18.8	8.4	8.4	18.0	10.8	11.3	20.3	6.9	5.3	13.9	9.4	10.6	19.4	7.0	6.6
Liv-Learning Gr.II																
A	N=18	18.8	8.6	6.9	15.9	10.2	9.0	19.1	6.0	5.0	11.2	7.4	8.4	17.1	6.0	5.1
B	N=23	18.6	7.4	7.3	18.6	11.1	10.2	21.0	7.1	5.3	14.3	9.0	9.7	19.2	7.0	5.4
C	N=20	17.8	7.5	7.2	15.8	10.0	9.3	19.8	6.8	5.2	12.0	7.9	9.2	15.4	4.8	4.9
Rank Correlation Between Univ. Sub-Score and Residence Hall score			.31			.77*			.45			.75*			.78*	

1. This sub-score includes only those items for the total university that were repeated in Part II, residence.

*Significant at the .05 level.

TABLE 3

MEAN SCORES FOR EACH MEN'S RESIDENCE HALL AND THE TOTAL UNIVERSITY SCALE

RESIDENCE HALL	No. in Sample	PRACTICALITY Total Univ.	PRACTICALITY Univ. Sub-Score[1]	PRACTICALITY Res. Hall	COMMUNITY Total Univ.	COMMUNITY Univ. Sub-Score[1]	COMMUNITY Res. Hall	AWARENESS Total Univ.	AWARENESS Univ. Sub-Score[1]	AWARENESS Res. Hall	PROPRIETY Total Univ.	PROPRIETY Univ. Sub-Score[1]	PROPRIETY Res. Hall	SCHOLARSHIP Total Univ.	SCHOLARSHIP Univ. Sub-Score[1]	SCHOLARSHIP Res. Hall
Conv. Gr. V																
A	N=10	17.5	8.1	8.3	17.7	10.6	10.4	16.8	5.9	4.9	12.8	7.6	8.4	16.4	5.8	6.0
B	N=12	18.1	8.2	7.9	14.6	8.5	8.9	18.5	4.9	4.0	13.2	8.0	7.5	16.4	4.8	4.2
C	N=13	19.2	8.1	8.7	16.2	9.2	10.8	17.2	5.1	4.3	12.3	7.8	7.4	15.2	4.6	4.8
D	N=14	18.8	8.0	7.6	14.2	8.4	8.6	13.1	3.4	2.2	11.4	7.4	7.2	13.3	4.5	3.6
Conv. Gr. IV																
A	N=15	18.1	8.1	7.5	16.7	9.8	9.7	18.5	6.2	4.9	14.2	9.3	9.3	18.5	6.5	6.4
B	N=15	17.7	7.7	7.1	17.3	10.0	9.7	18.3	5.7	5.5	12.1	8.0	9.2	16.8	5.4	6.1
Conv. Gr. VI																
A	N=20	18.3	8.0	7.9	15.6	9.6	9.8	15.2	3.9	3.5	11.1	6.8	6.8	14.4	4.4	4.4
B	N=14	17.1	7.1	7.4	14.6	8.6	8.7	15.0	4.9	4.2	12.8	7.8	8.4	15.2	5.3	4.8
Liv-Learning Gr.I																
A	N=18	18.5	8.3	7.8	18.2	11.1	11.0	17.3	5.2	4.3	12.6	8.1	8.3	17.2	6.3	5.9
B	N=21	17.2	7.1	6.9	16.6	10.0	10.0	17.4	5.3	4.1	12.1	7.6	7.8	17.8	6.1	5.7
C	N=23	18.8	8.1	8.4	16.6	10.4	9.9	18.5	6.2	5.3	12.6	7.8	7.9	16.1	5.9	5.3
Liv-Learning Gr.II																
A	N=21	18.4	7.8	6.5	15.2	9.3	8.7	18.9	5.8	4.4	12.3	8.1	8.6	16.2	5.7	4.9
B	N=21	18.2	8.2	7.6	17.3	10.3	9.8	20.3	6.5	5.6	26.4	8.0	8.0	19.1	6.8	6.2
C	N=17	18.2	7.8	7.9	15.2	9.9	10.3	17.6	5.5	5.0	13.0	8.2	7.6	14.5	5.2	5.2
Rank Correlation Between Sub-Score and Residence hall score			.59*			.68*			.88*			.54*			.84*	

1. This sub-score includes only those items for the total university that were repeated in Part II, residence.
*Significant at the .05 level.

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